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Office of Current Intelligence

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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DOS review(s)
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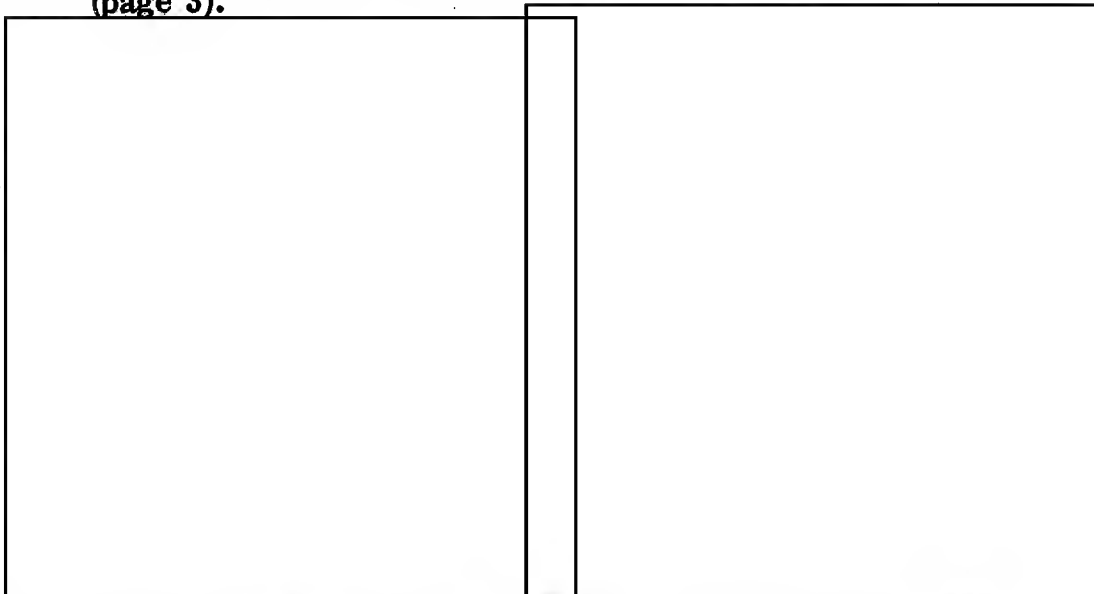
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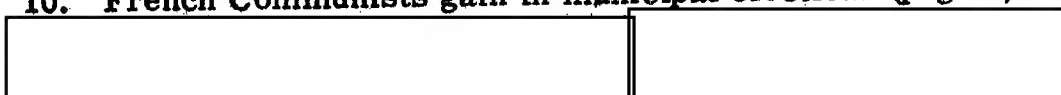
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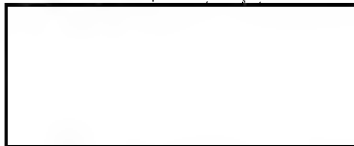


INFO RECEIVED LATE - VIET MINH OFFENSIVE IN SOUTHERN TONKIN - 2 -

GENERAL

1. Belgium favors membership of Greece and Turkey in NATO:

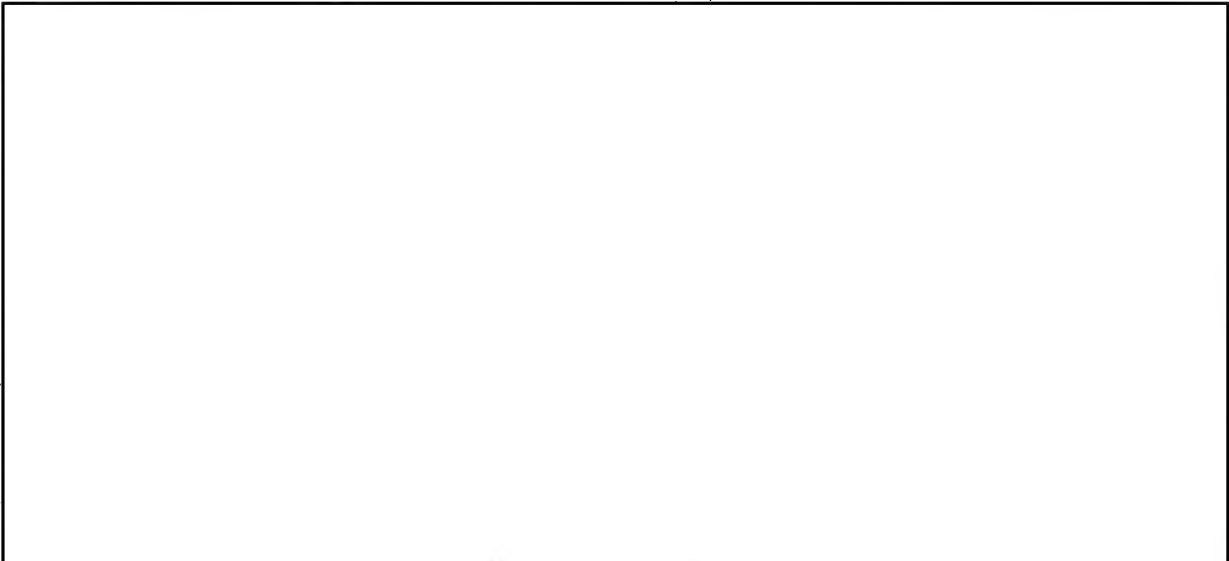
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A Belgian Foreign Office official has informed the US Ambassador in Brussels that, on balance, Belgium feels that Greece and Turkey should

become NATO members. Although Belgium wishes first to have fuller understanding of the views of other countries and the risks involved, Belgium does not consider the fear of Soviet reaction to Greek and Turkish membership in NATO as a valid reason for opposition in view of the defense commitments already undertaken by Western Europe.

Comment: Belgian support of the US position is an indication of a definite break in the opposition to Greek and Turkish membership in NATO on the part of the small countries of Western Europe. The Netherlands, which has been speaking for the small countries, has indicated a possible modification of its opposition if the importance of Greece and Turkey in the defense of the Mediterranean is spelled out.



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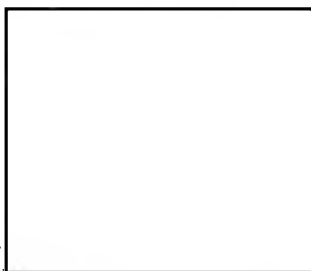
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7. Egyptians dissatisfied with British attitude on current issues:

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According to US Ambassador Caffery in Cairo, the Egyptian Foreign Minister is not pleased with (a) the UK attitude regarding the transit of tankers through the Suez Canal, and (b) the current situation regarding Anglo-Egyptian defense negotiations. The Egyptian Foreign Minister re-

ceived the British protest on the blocking of oil tankers through the Suez Canal coldly and said that the Egyptian Government had no intention of changing its policy in that respect. As a result of the British failure to reply on the defense negotiations, the Egyptian Foreign Minister indicated to Caffery that he was in "despair" and sees only trouble ahead.

Comment: There is no indication that the Arab determination to prevent oil from reaching Haifa has weakened; British representations on this subject will only exacerbate already strained Anglo-Egyptian relations.

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EASTERN EUROPE

8. Czech police increase activity against Western news agencies:

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[REDACTED] US Ambassador Briggs in Prague has been notified by his French colleague that the Acting Chief of the Agence France Presse, a Czech national, has been arrested. Increased police activity against the Czechoslovak employees of the United Press and Reuters News agencies is evident, as well. Briggs interprets this activity as an attempt to intimidate Western correspondents into leaving Czechoslovakia or at least into refraining from reporting material unfavorable to the Communist regime. He points out, however, that the Czechoslovak Government may be preparing to arrest other foreign correspondents as accomplices of the recently arrested US correspondent, William Oatis.

WESTERN EUROPE

9. West German leaders disappointed over Council of Europe session:

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[REDACTED] West German delegates to the recent Council of Europe meeting in Strasbourg have indicated their general disappointment with the failure of the Council to achieve concrete results. They are now convinced that Britain is unwilling to join a United Europe and that, without England, French support is at best lukewarm. Leaders of the German government coalition were, however, pleased with the positive action of the Council in endorsing the Schuman Plan, and want to proceed with rapid ratification of the Plan in Bonn in order to give new impetus to the European movement. Meanwhile the opposition Social Democrats have criticized the Council session and its endorsement of the Schuman Plan as inconclusive.

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Comment: Initial West German enthusiasm over achieving equal status in the Council of Europe has apparently waned as a result of the recent Council session. The German government leaders still feel, however, that the Council can provide a good opportunity for increased German influence in Western European affairs, and they will continue to press for the creation of an effective European Parliament within the Council structure.

10. French Communists gain in municipal elections:

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French Communist Party lists were returned with outright majorities in two municipal elections in the Paris region on 27 May.

Although both elections occurred in traditional Communist strongholds, it is noteworthy that in each case Communist candidates registered an increase over the previous municipal election figures, jumping from 43 percent to 54 percent in one instance. Communist propaganda is pointing out that the French Communist Party is now capable of achieving a flat majority and thereby winning all seats in the departments where it secured 40 percent of the 1946 vote. The US Embassy in Paris comments that in 1946 Communist candidates secured 40 percent of the popular vote in only two departments.

Comment: While elections in the Paris "Red Belt" give little basis for an estimate of the national strength of the Communists, these results bear out recent reports that the party is recouping its earlier losses. Inflation and successful strike activity have re-established Communist prestige in working-class communities, and can be expected to counteract the effects of electoral reform and limit French Communist Party losses in the June national elections.

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INFORMATION RECEIVED JUST PRIOR TO PUBLICATION

Viet Minh Offensive in southern Tonkin:

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US Consul Blancke in Hanoi reports that the anticipated Viet Minh offensive in the southern Tonkin delta apparently has begun. A reported Viet Minh version of the offensive

states that "some 20" rebel battalions have attacked the French defense perimeter at Ninh Binh, 50 miles south of Hanoi. Blancke reports observing strong French troop reinforcements and air support being sent to the battle area on 29 May.

Comment: Previous reports had predicted an offensive in the Ninh Binh area during the last week in May with the objective of capturing rice stores and the rice-producing land east of Ninh Binh. The average strength of a Viet Minh battalion is 500-800; thus the attack could involve as many as 16,000 men. Earlier evidence of the deployment of three Viet Minh divisions opposite the southern perimeter, coupled with the alleged commitment of 20 battalions indicates that the Viet Minh may have launched one of its largest offensive efforts to date.

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